

BENJY IN BEASTLAND.

PODGY BENJY.

BENJY was a bad boy. His name was Benjamin, but he was always called Benjy. He looked like something ending in *gy* or *gy*, or rather *dgy*, such as *podgy*. Indeed he was *podgy*, and moreover *smudgy*, having that cloudy, slovenly look (like a slate *smudged* instead of washed) which is characteristic of people whose morning toilet is not so thorough as it should be.

Now I am very fond of boys. I do not think, with some people, that they are nuisances to be endured as best may be till they develop into men. I think an intelligent and modest boy is one of the most charming of companions. As to an obliging boy (that somewhat rare but not extinct animal), there is hardly a limit to his powers of usefulness; or anything—from emigrating to a desert island to cleaning the kitchen clock—that one would not feel justified in undertaking with his assistance, and free access to his pocket stores. Then boys' wholesale powers of accumulation and destruction render their dens convenient storehouses of generally useless and particularly useful lumber. If you want string or wire, or bottles or flowerpots, or a bird-cage, or an odd glove or shoe, or anything of any kind to patch up something of a similar kind, or missing property of your own or another's—go to a boy's room! There one finds abundance of everything, from cobblers' wax to the carmine from one's own water-colour box. (One is apt to recognise old acquaintances, and one occasionally reclaims their company!) All things are in more or less serviceable condition, and at the same time sufficiently damaged to warrant appropriation to the needs of the moment. One suffers much loss at boys' hands from time to time, and it is trying to have one's dainty feminine bowers despoiled of their treasures; but there are occasions when one spoils the spoiler. Then what admirable field naturalists boys can make! They are none the worse for nocturnal moth hunts, or wading up a stream for a *Batrachosperma*, or for standing in a pond pressing recruits for the fresh-water aquarium. A "collection" more or less is as nothing in the vast chaos of their possessions, though some scrupulous sister might be worried to find "a place for it." And Fortune (capricious

dame!) is certainly fond of boys, and guides some young "harum-scarum" to a *habitat* that has eluded the spectacles of science. And their cuttings always grow! Then as to boys' fun; within certain limits, there is no rough-and-ready wit to be compared with it.

Thus it is a pity that some boys bring the class into disrepute—boys who are neither intelligent, modest, obliging, nor blest with cultivated tastes—boys who kick animals, tease children, sneer at feminine society, and shirk any company that is better than their own—boys, in short, like Benjy, who at one period of his career was all this, and who had a taste for low company too, and something in his general appearance that made you think how good for him it would be if he could be well scrubbed with hot water and soft soap both inside and out.

But Benjy's worst fault, *the* vice of his character, was cruelty to animals. He was not merely cruel with the thoughtless cruelty of childhood, nor with the cruelty which is a secondary part of sport, nor with the occasional cruelty of selfishness or ill-temper. But he had that taste for torture, that pleasure in other creatures' pain, which does seem to be born with some boys. It is incomprehensible by those who have never felt the hateful temptation, and it certainly seems more near to a fiendish characteristic than to rank as a human infirmity.

Benjy was one of three children, and the only boy. He had two little sisters, but they were younger than himself, and he held them in supreme contempt. They were nice, merry little things, and many boys (between teasing, petting, patronising, and making them useful) would have found them companionable enough, at any rate for the holidays. But Benjy, as I have said, liked low company, and a boy with a taste for low company seldom cares for the society of his sisters. Benjy thought games stupid; he never touched his garden (though his sisters kept it religiously in order during his absence at school); and as to natural history, or reading, or any cultivated pursuit, such matters were not at all in Benjy's line. But he was proud of being patronised by Tom, the coachman's scapegrace son—a coarse, cruel, and uneducated lad, whose ideas of "fun" Benjy unfortunately made his own. With him he went to see pigs killed, helped to drown supernumerary pups and kittens, and became learned in dog-fights, cock-fights, rat-hunting, cat-hunting, and so forth. Benjy's father was an invalid, and he had no brothers, so that he was without due control

and companionship. His own lack of nice pursuits made the excitement of cruelty an acceptable amusement for his idleness, and he would have thought it unmanly to be more scrupulous and tenderhearted than the coachman's son. The society of this youth did not tend to improve Benjy's manners, and indeed he was very awkward in the drawing-room. But he was talkative enough in the stable, and rather a hero among the village boys who stoned frogs by the riverside, in the sweet days of early summer.

Truly Benjy had little in common with those fair, grey-eyed demure little maidens, his sisters. As one of them pathetically said, "Benjy does not care for us, you know, because we are only girls. So we have taken Nox for our brother."

NOX,

so called because he was (as poets say) as black as night, was a big, curly dog, partly retriever and partly of Newfoundland breed. He was altogether black, except for his paws, which were brown, and for a grey spot under his tail. Now as the grey-eyed gentle little sisters elected him for their brother in the room of Benjy, it is but fair to compare the two together.

Benjy, to look at, was smudgy and slovenly, and not at all handsome, for he hated tubs, and brushes, and soap, and cold water, and he liked to lie late in a morning, and then was apt to shuffle on his clothes and come down after very imperfect ablutions, having forgotten to brush his teeth, and with his hair still in dusty "cockatoos" from tossing about in bed.

Nox rose early, delighted in cold water, and had teeth like ivory, and hair as glossy as a raven's wing, his face beamed with intelligence and trustfulness, and his clear brown eyes looked straight into yours when you spoke to him, as if he would say, "Let my eyes speak for me, if you please; I have not the pleasure of understanding your language."

Benjy's waistcoat and shirt-front were often spotted with dirt, and generally untidy.

The covering of Nox's broad chest was always glossy and in good order.

Benjy would come into the drawing-room with muddy boots and dirty hands.

Nox, if he had been out in the mud, would lie down on his return and lick his broad soft brown paws like a cat till they were clean.

It has been said that Benjy did not appreciate the society of girls; but when Nox was petted by his lady-sisters, he put his big head on their shoulders, and licked their faces with his big red tongue (which was his way of kissing). And he would put up his brown feet in the most insinuating manner, and shake paws over and over again, pressing tightly with his strong toes, but never hurting the little girls' hands.

Benjy destroyed lives with much wanton cruelty.

Nox had saved lives at the risk of his own.

The ruling idea of his life, and what he evidently considered his most important pursuit, in fact, his duty or vocation, must be described at some length. Near the dog's home ran a broad deep river. Here one could bathe and swim most delightfully. Here also many an unfortunate animal found a watery grave. There was one place from which (the water being deep and the bank convenient at this spot) the poor wretches were generally thrown. A good deal of refuse and worn-out articles of various sorts also got flung in here, for at this point the river skirted the back part of the town. Hither at early morning Nox would come, in conformity with his own peculiar code of duty, which may be summed up in these words: "Whatever does not properly or naturally belong to the water should be fetched out." Now near the River Seine, in Paris, there is a building called the *Morgue*, where the bodies of the drowned are laid out for recognition by their friends. There was no such institution in the town where Nox lived, so he established a Morgue for himself. Not far from the spot I have mentioned, an old willow tree spread its branches widely over the bank, and here and there stretched a long arm, and touched the river with its pointed fingers. Under the shadow of this tree was the Morgue, and here Nox brought the bodies he rescued from the river and laid them down. I use the word bodies in its most scientific sense, for it was not alone the bodies of men or animals that Nox felt himself bound to reclaim. He would strive desperately for the rescue of an old riding-boot, the rung of a chair, a worn-out hearthbrush, or anything obviously out of place in the deep waters. Whatever the prize might be, when he had successfully brought it ashore, he would toss his noble head, arch his neck, paw with his forefeet, and twist and stick

out his curly back, as much as to say, "Will no one pat me as I deserve?" Though he held his prize with all the delicacy of his retriever instincts, he could seldom resist the temptation to give it one proud shake, after which he would hurry with it to the willow tree, as if conscious that it was high time it should be properly attended to. There the mother whose child had fallen into the river, and the mother whose child had thrown her broom into the water, might come to reclaim their property, with equal chance of success.

Now it is hardly needful to say that between Benjy and Nox there was very little in common. And if there was one thing about Nox which Benjy disliked more than another, it was his talent for rescue, and the institution of the Morgue.

There was a reason for this. Benjy had more than once been concerned in the death of animals belonging to other people, and the owners had made an inconvenient fuss and inquiry. In such circumstances Benjy and Tom were accustomed to fasten a stone to the corpse and drop it into the river, and thus, as they hoped, get rid of all testimony to the true reason of the missing favourite's disappearance.

But of all the fallacies which shadow the half-truths of popular proverbs, none is greater than that of the saying, "Dead men tell no tales." For, to begin with, the dead body is generally the first witness to a murder, and that despite the most careful hiding. And so the stones that had been tied with hurried or nervous fingers were apt to come off, and then the body of neighbour Goodman's spaniel, or old Lady Dumble's Angola cat, would float on the river, and tell their own true and terrible tale. But even then the current might have favoured Benjy, and carried the corpses away, had it not been for Nox's early rounds whilst Benjy was still in bed, and for that hateful and too notorious Morgue.

MISTER ROUGH

was another dog belonging to Benjy's father, and commonly regarded as the property of Benjy himself. He was a wiry-haired terrier, with clipped ears and tail, and a chain collar that jingled as he trotted about on his bent legs. He was of a grizzled brown colour, excepting his shirt-front and his toe-tips, which were like the white toes of woollen socks. His eyes had been scratched by cats—though not quite out—his lean little body bore marks of all kinds of rough

usage, and his bark was hoarse from a long imprisonment in a damp outhouse in winter. Much training (to encounter rats and cats), hard usage, short commons, and a general preponderance of kicks over halfpence in his career had shortened his temper and his bark, and caused both to be exhibited more often than would probably have been the case in happier circumstances. He had been characterised as "Rough, Tough, Gruff, and up to snuff," and the description fitted well.

Now if Benjy had a kind feeling for any animal, it was for Mister Rough, though I think it might more truly be called admiration. And yet he treated him worse than Nox, to whom he bore an unmitigated dislike. But Nox was a large dog, and could not be ill-treated with impunity. So Benjy feared him, and hated him double. Next to an animal too strong to be ill-used at all, Benjy disliked an animal too weak to be ill-used much or long. Now this veteran Mister Rough, there was no saying what he had not borne, and would not bear. He seemed to absorb the nine lives of every cat he killed into his own constitution, and only to grow leaner, tougher, more scarred, more grizzled, and more "game" as time went on. And so there grew up in Benjy an admiration for his powers of endurance that almost amounted to regard.

MORE MISCHIEF.

Benjy had got a bad fit on him. He was in a mood for mischief. I think he was not well, and he certainly was intolerable to all about him. He even ventured to play a trick on Nox. Thus:

Nox was a luxurious, comfort-loving old fellow, and after a good deal of exercise in the fresh air he thoroughly enjoyed the drowsy, soporific effect of a good meal, a warm room, and a comfortable hearth-rug. If anything in the events of the day had disturbed his composure, or affected his feelings, how he talked it all over to himself with curious, expressive little noises, marvellously like human speech, till by degrees the remarks came few and far between, the velvety eyelids closed, and with one expressive grunt Nox was asleep! But in a few moments, though the handsome black body was at rest on the crimson sheepskin that was so becoming to his beauty, his—whatever you please to allow him in the shape of an "inner consciousness"—was in the land of dreams. He was talking once more, this time with

short, muffled barks and whines, and twitching violently with his legs. Perhaps he fancied himself accomplishing a rescue. But a whistle from his master would pierce his dream, and quiet without awaking him.

In his most luxurious moments he would roll on to his back, and stretching his neck and his four legs to their uttermost, would sleep with a perfect *abandon* of enjoyment. It was one of these occasions that Benjy chose for teasing poor Nox. As he sat near him he kept lightly pricking his sensitive lips with a fine needle. Nox would half wake, shake his head, rub his lips with his paw in great disgust, and finally drop off again. When he was fairly asleep, Benjy recommenced, for he did dearly love to tease and torment, and this evening he was in a restless, mischievous mood. At last one prick was a little too severe; Nox jumped up with a start, and the needle went deeply in, the top breaking off with the jerk, but the remainder was fast in the flesh, where his little sisters discovered it.

Oh! how they wept for the sufferings of their pet! *They* were not afraid of Nox, and had no scruple in handling the powerful mouth whose sharp white teeth had so often pretended to bite their hands, with a pretence as gentle as if they had been made of eggshell. At last the braver of the two held his lips and extracted the needle, whilst the other wiped the tears from her sister's eyes that she might see what she was about. Nox himself sat still and moaned faintly, and wagged his tail very feebly; but when the operation was over he fairly knocked the little sisters down in his gratitude, and licked their faces till he was out of breath. Then he talked to himself for a full half-hour about the injury, and who could have been the culprit. And then he fell asleep and dreamed of his enemy, and growled at him.

But Benjy went out and threw a stick at Mister Rough. And when Mister Rough caught it he swung him by it violently round and round. But Mister Rough's teeth were beginning to be the worse for wear, and at the fifth round he lost his hold for the first time in his career.

Then Benjy would have caught him to punish him, but either unnerved by his failure, or suspicious of the wicked look in Benjy's eye, Mister Rough for the first time "feared his fate," and took to his heels.

Benjy could not find him, but he found Tom, who was chasing a Scotch terrier with stones. So Benjy joined the sport, which would have been first-rate fun, but that one of the stones perversely hit the poor beast on the head, and put an end to the chase. And that night a neighbour's dog was lost, and there was another corpse in the river.

FROM THE MORGUE TO THE MOON.

Benjy went to bed, but he could not sleep. He wished he had not put that dog in the river—it would get him into a scrape. He had been flogged for Mr. Goodman's spaniels and though Mister Rough had been flogged for Lady Dumble's cat, Benjy knew on whose shoulders the flogging should by rights have descended. Then Nox seemed all right, in spite of the needle, and would no doubt pursue his officious charities with sunrise. Benjy could not trust himself to get up early in the morning, but he could go out that night, and he would—with a hayfork—and get the body out of the water, and hide or bury it.

When Benjy came to the river-side a sort of fascination drew him to the Morgue. What if the body were already there! But it was not. There were only a kitten, part of an old basket, and the roller of a jack-towel. And when Benjy looked up into the willow the moon was looking down at him through the forked limbs of the tree, and it looked so large and so near, that Benjy thought that if he were sitting upon a certain branch he could touch it with his hand.

Then he bethought him of a book that had been his mother's and now belonged to his sisters, in which it was amusingly pretended that dogs went to the moon after their existence on earth was over. The book had a frontispiece representing the dogs sitting in the moon and relating their former experiences.

"It would be odd if the one we killed last night were up there now," said Benjy to himself. And he fancied that as he said it the man in the moon winked at him.

"I wonder if it is really true," said Benjy, aloud.

"Not exactly," said the man in the moon, "but something like it. This is Beastland. Won't you come up?"

"Well, I never did!" cried Benjy, whose English was not of the most refined order.

"Oh, yes, you have," said the man in the moon, waggishly. "Now, are you coming up? But perhaps you can't climb."

"Can't I?" said Benjy, and in three minutes he was on the branch, and close to the moon. The higher he climbed the larger the moon looked, till it was like the biggest disc of light ever thrown by a magic lantern, and when he was fairly seated on the branch close by, he could see nothing but a blaze of white light all round him.

"Walk boldly in," he heard the man in the moon say. "Put out your feet, and don't be afraid; it's not so bright inside."

So Benjy put his feet down, and dropped, and thought he was certainly falling into the river. But he only fell upon his feet, and found himself in Beastland. It was an odd place truly!

As Cerberus guarded the entrance to Pluto's domains, so there sat at the going in to Beastland a black dog—the very black dog who gets on to sulky children's backs.

And on the back of the black dog sat a crow—the crow that people pluck when they quarrel; and though it has been plucked so often it has never been plucked bare, but is in very good feather yet, unfortunately.

And in a field behind the nightmare was grazing. And in a corner of the field was the mare's nest.

And in the mare's nest sat a tell-tale-tit—the little bird who tells tales and carries news. And it has neither rest nor nest of its own, for gossips are always gadding, and mischief is always being made.

And in a cat's cradle swung from the sky slept the cat who washes the dishes, with a clean dishcloth under her head, ready to go down by the first sunbeam to her work.

Whilst the bee that gets into Scotchmen's bonnets went buzzing restlessly up and down with nothing to do, for all the lunatics in North Britain happened to be asleep that evening.

And on the right nail hung a fancy portrait of the cat who "does it," when careless or dishonest servants waste and destroy things. I need hardly say that the cat could not be there herself, because (like Mrs. Gamp's friend, Mrs. Harris) "there ain't no such a person."

Benjy stared about him for a bit, and then he began to feel uncomfortable.

"Where is the man in the moon?" he inquired.

"Gone to Norwich," said the tell-tale-tit.

"And have you anything to say against that?" asked the crow.
"Caw, caw, caw! pluck me, if you dare!"

"It's very odd," thought Benjy; "but I'll go on."

The black dog growled, but let him pass; the bee buzzed about, and the cat in the cradle swung and slept serenely through it all.

"I should get on quicker if I rode instead of walking," thought Benjy; so he went up to the nightmare and asked if she would carry him a few miles.

"You must be the victim of a very singular delusion," said the nightmare, coolly. "It is for me to be carried by you, not for you to ride on me." And as Benjy looked, her nose grew longer and longer, and her eyes were so hideous, they took Benjy's breath away; and he fled as fast as his legs would carry him. And so he got deep, deep into Beastland.

(To be continued.)

REAL CITY ARABS.

"Sugar and spice, and all that's nice,
And *that's* what little girls are made of."



O, you know, *we* always say; but I am very much afraid that is not quite the view that is taken of us in some other countries we have all heard about.

I hardly know what a turbaned Turk thinks *we* are made of, he is so extremely unpolite about us; and it is the same all over the East. They don't like us even to be born. A poor little baby-girl, when she opens her black eyes anywhere between Constantinople and Hong Kong, gets no welcome from anybody—not even from her mother, who is always distressed, and perhaps cross, because she is not a boy; and, like everybody else, seems to believe that the sooner there are no more little girls born the better. In India many a baby-girl is left to die, because it is not wanted; and in a great city of China such numbers are deserted, that it is said a cart goes round the streets every morning to clear away the babies, just as the dustman's cart goes round in an English town to take away the rubbish. Of course, such poor little "rubbish" as these Eastern baby-girls, when they begin to grow out of babyhood, are not thought worth any kind of teaching. For years and years their brothers are squatting in a circle on the ground, round the old Moslem or Buddhist teacher, learning those curious Eastern charac-